DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 128 675 CG 010 779

AUTHOR Fink, Herbert C.; Wilkins, William E.
TITLE Belief in a Just World, Interpersonal Trust, and Attitudes.
PUB DATE 22 Apr 76
NOTE 4p.; Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association (New York, N.Y., April 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Beliefs; Civic Belief; *Credibility; *Factor Analysis; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Locus of Control; Political Attitudes; Psychological Studies; *Social Attitudes; Undergraduate Students; Values
IDENTIFIERS *Just World Scale

ABSTRACT

Factor analysis of Rubin and Peplau's belief in a Just World scale yielded three factors. The factors were named Deservingness, Denial of injustice, and Evaluate and act justly. Just World scores were generally unrelated to demographic data (such as socio-economic class, age, sex, family size, grade point average) among the undergraduate subjects. Belief in a just world was significantly related to greater interpersonal trust and internal locus of control. Greater belief in a just world was significantly related to less endorsement of New Left ideology, and less favorability toward the Attica uprising and President Nixon's impeachment. (Author)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED128675

BELIEF IN A JUST WORLD, INTERPERSONAL TRUST, AND ATTITUDES

Herbert C. Fink & William E. Wilkins, Psychology Dept., SUNY-Brockport

EPA, 1976 Crystal Rm, McAlpin Hotel April 22, 1976

Abstract: Factor analysis of the Just World scale yielded three factors. Just World scores were generally unrelated to demographic data among the undergraduate Ss. Belief in a just world was significantly related to greater interpersonal trust and internal locus of control. Greater belief in a just world was significantly related to less endorsement of New Left ideology, and less favorability toward the Attica uprising and President Nixon's impeachment.

Study I

The JW scale was administered to 291 undergraduates of both sexes. JW items were subjected to a principal component factor analysis. The eigenvalues of the first three factors were 3.1, 1.8, and 1.6. A varimax rotation of the factor matrix was performed and three distinct subscales emerged. The subscales were determined by selecting items which loaded highly on one factor ($p<.0001$) with low loadings on the other two factors. The three factors accounted for 16%, 9%, and 8% respectively, of the variance. The table contains the loadings of the items on each factor and the keying of the items. Each factor consists of 5 items.

Factor 1: Deservingness. The items which load on factor 1 have a common theme that outcomes are deserved. Items loading high on factor 1 stress the fair and equitable relation between inputs and outputs.

Factor 2: Denial of injustice. The 5 items which comprise factor 2 are keyed in the disagree direction. High scorers on this factor deny injustice occurs with frequency. They deny good deeds go unrewarded (item 1), deny that careful drivers get hurt (item 7), deny that infractions go unnoticed (item 10), deny that suffering has no personal cause (item 19), and deny that guilty defendents get off free(item 20).

Factor 3: Evaluate and act justly. The five items of factor 3 have a common theme that people can and do evaluate or judge what is just or unjust, right or wrong. Key words in each item on this factor are dominantly evaluative: good (item 2), fair (item 6), reputation (item 14), principles (item 15), and admired (item 17). Underlying this factor may be the conception that people realize and act on the existence of what is just. Parents fairly judge their children's behavior (items 2 & 17), defendents are rightly judged (item 6), reputations may be assessed (item 14), and principles are evaluated by voters (item 15).

Demographic correlates. Just World scores were generally independent of certain life experiences (which presumably affect one's feedback from the world) as measured by typical sociological variables. One's year in school, sex, age, socio-economic class, family size, birth rank, and grade point average were generally unrelated to the person's degree of belief that the world is just. The correlations are presented in the table, N=201 undergraduates.

Study II

Rubin & Peplau (1973;1974) constructed and validated a scale assessing belief in a just world (JW). Individuals with high belief in a JW perceive a strong relation between a person's merit and his fate. Good people are related to reward, evildoers to suffering. It was expected that belief in a JW would relate to interpersonal trust and internal locus of control. Underlying JW, trust, and internality is the motif that the world is predictable. In line with Rubin's predictions, it was also expected that JW scores would relate to political attitudes. Strong belief in a JW encourages acceptance of existing social and political institutions.

Method: Ss were 97 undergraduates of both sexes at Brockport. They were administered Rubin & Peplau's JW scale, Rotter's interpersonal trust scale, Rotter's I-E scale, and the New Left ideology scale. Their attitudes toward the Attica uprising, the impeachment of President Nixon, and the kidnapping of Patricia Hearst by the SLA, were assessed on the evaluative factor of the semantic differential. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between JW scores and scores on the other scales.

Locus of control: JW scores were significantly ($p<.01$) related to greater internality

BEST COPY AVAILABLE HARD COPY NOT AVAILABLE

on both of Mirels factors of Rotter's I-E scale. JW scores were related to a greater extent ($p<.10$) to the personal control factor, $r=-.52$, than to the political factor, $r=-.31$. The more strongly Ss believed the world is just, the more strongly they believed they have mastery over their lives, and also, the individual is capable of exerting an impact on political affairs. Both the JW and I-E scales have in common that one's input to the world will directly effect what one receives from life.

Trust. The correlation between JW scores and scores on the trust scale was significant, $r=.55$. The more a S believed in a JW, the greater his general expectancy that the statements of other people or groups can be relied on. Ss who believed the world is frequently unjust were more prone to be suspicious of other people's intentions. If one thinks others are out to get as much as they can for themselves (low trust), people may not get what they deserve (low JW). If people get what they deserve, honesty should lead to reward, dishonesty to punishment.

The more a S believed in a JW, the more trusting he was on each of the three factors of the scale found by Kaplan (1973). JW scores were significantly related to the factor of institutional trust, $r=.42$. High JW Ss believed major institutions of American society are credible. The more Ss believed in a JW, the more prone were they to believe the mass media and public officials "tell it as it is". JW scores were significantly related to the Sincerity factor, $r=.34$. The tendency to believe the world is just was directly related to perceiving most others as candid and honest. JW scores were significantly related to the Caution factor, $r=.32$. The more one thinks that character and outcomes are equitably related, the more Ss believed that people will not take advantage of them.

If one trusts another, one expects the other's statements realistically describe some segment of the world. People answer polls honestly, news reports are accurate, etc. If others describe the world realistically, then the world is more predictable since one knows more, The notion of predictability underlies belief in the JW hypothesis in Lerner's theory (1970,1974). If one's fate was whimsically determined, life would be intolerable, maddening. Therefore people believe the world is just—people deserve what they get and can get what they deserve.

New Left ideology. The more strongly one believed the world is just, the less one adhered to New Left ideology, $r=-.38$. The more Ss believed the world is just, the less the tendency to indicate disenchantment with the existing social order and the failings of American society. The more Ss believed in a JW, the less likely were they to feel the Establishment unfairly controls American society. Other studies (Rubin, 1975) showed high JW Ss admire and support those in power in society.

Attica. The stronger Ss believed in a JW, the less favorable were they to "The uprising by the Attica inmates", $r=.23$. High JW Ss were more prone to devalue the Attica uprising. Probably high JW scorers perceived Attica as thugs destroying order, defying punishment, and getting away with it.

Impeachment. JW scorers were inversely related to "The impeachment of President Nixon", $r=-.21$. This study was conducted in February, 1974 when the plurality of public opinion was somewhat against the removal of then Pres. Nixon. Again, strong belief in a JW encourages support of the powerful; they deserve their station.

Hearst. There was no significant relation, $r=-.07$, between JW scores and attitude toward "The kidnapping of Patricia Hearst by the SLA". This study took place a month after the kidnapping when Patty was seen as a crime victim, before her conversion to Tania.

The greater Ss belief in a just world, the more trusting were they on all measures of interpersonal trust, internal control, and the more accepting of existing social institutions (Government, prison). High JW Ss were more prone to think American society is fundamentally good—one need not institute societal changes.

Funk & Wilkins EPA, 1987 Ap

	Total scale JW	JW I	JW II	JW III	
JW I	.67*	-			N=291
JW II	.56*	.13**	-		* $p<.01$
JW III	.64*	.17**	.16*	-	** $p<.05$
College class	-.04	.05	.02	-.15*	
Sex	.05	-.03	-.06	.08	N=201
Age	.05	.14*	-.01	-.01	* $p<.05$
SES	-.01	-.12	.05	-.02	
Birth rank	-.10	-.03	-.12	-.11	
No. of sibs	.04	.02	.00	.03	
G.P.A.	.07	.01	.04	-.03	

I	II	III	Re JW scale
.53			1. Good deeds often go unnoticed and unrewarded.
	.45		2. When parents punish their children, it is almost always for good reasons.
			3. It is rare for an innocent man to be wrongly sent to jail.
.55			4. People who get "lucky breaks" have usually earned their good fortune.
.56			5. Students almost always deserve the grades they receive in school.
		-.66	6. It is often impossible for a person to receive a fair trial in this country.
.46			7. Careful drivers are just as likely to get hurt in traffic accidents as careless ones.
			8. Men who keep in shape have little chance of suffering a heart attack.
			9. Crime doesn't pay.
.62			10. In professional sports, many fouls and infractions never get called by the referee.
			11. Although evil men may hold political power for a while, in the general course of history good wins out.
.61			12. People who meet with misfortune often have brought it on themselves.
.54			13. Basically, the world is a just place.
		-.45	14. I've found that a person rarely deserves the reputation he has.
		-.43	15. The political candidate who sticks up for his principles rarely gets elected.
.63			16. By and large, people deserve what they get.
		-.51	17. Parents tend to overlook the things most to be admired in their children.
			18. In any business or profession, people who do their job well rise to the top.
.60			19. Many people suffer through absolutely no fault of their own.
.58			20. It is a common occurrence for a guilty person to get off free in American courts.

	JW	JW I	II	III	
Rotter's I-E	-.58	-.43	-.44	-.31	N=97
Personal control	-.32	-.43	-.29	-.31	$r \geq .20$, $p<.05$
Political control	-.31	-.26	-.25	-.12	$r \geq .26$, $p<.01$
Trust (total)	.55	.37	.45	.34	
Institutional trust	.42	.19	.46	.26	Hi scores keyed as follows:
Sincerity	.34	.24	.19	.21	JW = greater belief in JW
Caution	.32	.24	.25	.19	I-E = greater externality
New Left	-.38	-.05	-.35	-.43	Trust = greater trust
Impeachment of Nixon	-.21	-.13	.03	-.16	NL = greater belief in NL
Uprising by Attica inmates	-.23	-.16	-.10	-.11	Attitudes = greater favorability
Kidnapping of Heiress	-.07	.02	-.05	-.13	